

MONKS, EX-MONKS, AND SCOTSMEN:

More Writings on Man's & Woman's Best Friend

by Kathryn J. Kirkpatrick

In America today there are over 41,000,000 dogs. Only slightly over half of these will even answer the basic obedience command of 'sit.' Perhaps you've come into contact with one of these uninformed canines already: at the beach when the neighboring party's dog comes over to drool on your legs and eat your picnic while his owners inform you, "It's OK, he doesn't bite;" or at a friend's when the dog rushes up to you at the door and furiously attacks your ankle while her owner mumbles, "No, no Muffy, that's not nice." Publishers are aware of the vast number of dogs waiting for training. Every year they put out hundreds of new books guaranteed to transform your recalcitrant canine into a modern wonder dog. How is the conscientious owner to know which authority to consult?

Fortunately, dogs are intelligent and quite easy to train. You will generally get credible results no matter what book you pick up as long as you are consistent in your approach to your dog. There are some books, however, that go beyond mere technique and attempt to raise the level of our understanding of dogs in general, not just modify the behavior of a specific dog. Some of the best books of this type have their origin in a small religious community in upstate New York, the New Skete Monastery, home to the monks and nuns of New Skete and their famous German shepherds. The monks started working with



other monks; soon they all became involved in the process of training the dogs. Brother Thomas wanted the dogs to live in quiet and harmony without fighting among themselves, but did not want to keep them in kennels. He came up with the solution of assigning each

In their new book, *The Art of Raising a Puppy* (Little, Brown), the monks deal more specifically with raising and training a puppy. Their experience over the years has shown them that the older problem dog often develops its trouble-

mitment to the new animal. This is a book to buy and read before even looking for a new dog.

Once you've gotten the dog, or have had it for several years and find yourself having problems with its behavior, another new book, *People, Pooches & Problems*, by Job Michael Evans (Howell) is helpful. Evans started his career with dogs as a monk of New Skete, but has since resigned from the monastery and gone into training on his own. The monastery introduced him to dogs, and he retains the monks' respect for the animal; his writing, however, has a wittier, more worldly edge to it. This book is helpful in breaking your dog of bad habits it has fallen into (most often with your help, as Evans points out). He uses some tricky psychology, and stages events for your dog to practice right versus wrong behavior. Besides being edifying, the stories he tells of problem dogs and their owners are quite entertaining. What fun it is to hear what other dog owners have put up with, especially when you don't have to clean up the mess.

Epitomizing the combination of brilliant dogs and men are the characters in *Eminent Dogs Dangerous Men*, by Donald McCaig (Edward Burlingame Books). These are no ordinary dogs and their handlers, but Scottish Border Collies and the shepherds who work with them. McCaig has collies in the United States, but is determined to purchase his next dog in Scotland; he spends a summer attending sheep trials